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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Regional District of East Kootenay
Ktunaxa First Nation

UNIQUE AGREEMENT WILL BENEFIT LAKE KOOCANUSA

CRANBROOK – The Province, Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and Ktunaxa First Nation have signed an agreement that aims to balance social, cultural, environmental and economic values in the Lake Koocanusa area.

The engagement protocol, which solidifies the parties' commitment to create a framework for planning, was announced by Bill Bennett, Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts and MLA for East Kootenay, on behalf of Agriculture and Lands Minister Stan Hagen, along with Ktunaxa Nation Chair Chief Sophie Pierre and RDEK Electoral Area B director Heath Slee.

"My constituents recognize the importance of planning the future of Lake Koocanusa before development proceeds," said Bennett. "It is very positive that the provincial government is working closely with the Ktunaxa First Nation and the RDEK to ensure that a balance of social, cultural, environmental and economic values is maintained around Lake Koocanusa. Koocanusa is important to all of us."

Lake Koocanusa and the surrounding area are located within the Ktunaxa Traditional Territory, and contain a high concentration of Crown land that is within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The land has been held in a development and marketing reserve since the early 1990s.

"Ktunaxa Nation Council embraces this government-to-government opportunity," said Chief Pierre. "We look forward to this innovative, collaborative decision-making process on matters affecting Ktunaxa interests, and on engaging constructively with our neighbours."

A working group has been established with representatives from the parties. The engagement protocol will allow the parties to develop a collaborative framework, solidifying intergovernmental relationships, as well as provide a forum to discuss resources required for planning in the Lake Koocanusa area.

"The mix of Crown and private land, increasing development pressures and the wide range of land-use values in the area need careful consideration," said Slee. "We are looking forward to working with the Ktunaxa Nation Council and the Province on the planning process."

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Lake Koocanusa is a 145-km reservoir created by the 1972 Libby dam in Montana. Almost half of the reservoir lies in B.C. More information on the engagement protocol can be found at http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/slrp/news.html.

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